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FOR S/CT AND NEA/ARP

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SUBJECT: DAILEY DELIVERS STRONG CT MESSAGE TO ROYG OFFICIALS

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Ambassador Dailey did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before its release.

Summary

1. (U) Coordinator for Counterterrorism Dell L. Dailey met on December 16 and 17 with ranking ROYG security officials. Assuring them that counterterrorism (CT) will continue to be a priority for the new U.S. Administration, he pressed his interlocutors for progress on effective CT legislation and action against terrorist groups. He also urged them to reinvigorate CT cooperation with the US and take needed steps to improve the operation of Yemen's CT forces. While reaction from his interlocutors was mixed, Dailey's firm intervention delivered an timely reminder of high-level USG concern over ROYG CT performance. End Summary.

2. (U) Dailey was given access to the key decision makers on CT issues in Yemen including: Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Affairs Rashad al-Alimi, Minister of Interior Mutaher al-Masri, Presidential Office Director and National Security Bureau Head Dr. Ali al-Anisi, and Political Security Organization Chief Ghalib Qamish. Additionally, Alimi hosted a luncheon for him that included Yemen's entire Supreme Security Committee.

You Are A Target

3. (C) Ambassador Dell L. Dailey began each of his meetings with ROYG interlocutors by assuring them that the coming change of Administration in the United States would not mean decreased USG interest in counterterrorism (CT) issues or decreased CT cooperation. (Note. Post's ROYG interlocutors have been broadly in favor of the President-elect but some seem to believe that the new Administration will not hold the ROYG to its CT commitments. End Note.)

4. (S) Using examples of counterterrorism success in other countries, Dailey highlighted the comparative lack of movement on key issues by the ROYG. He specifically emphasized enacting effective CT and CT finance legislation (two areas where the ROYG is noticeably deficient) and the need for aggressive offensive action against terrorist groups. Appealing to ROYG self-interest, he pointed out that terrorists fleeing more successful CT regimes will be looking for safe havens and Yemen's porous borders and mountainous topography combined with a permissive legal environment make it an inviting destination. He added that recent attacks demonstrate that al-Qaeda in Yemen is targeting the ROYG and ROYG interests.

5. (S) To varying degrees, ROYG officials conceded Dailey's points. All concurred that Yemen is a terrorist target. (Note. Post's ROYG contacts frequently assert that th ROYG is the real victim of terrorists in Yemen. End Note.) Al-Anisi complained that current law to combat money laundering (or terrorist finance) do not "meet our goals." Qamish noted that the lack of an effective CT law meant that his troops often arrested terrorists only to discover that they could not be prosecuted. He, however, diverted blame for this shortcoming, saying "we know that legislation is

important but the opposition opposes it." Others also offered excuses for ROYG shortcomings. Al-Alimi complained that "people do not appreciate the danger of terrorism, and party conflicts impede CT efforts." Qamish complained that unrest in Yemen's southern governorates and in Sa'ada absorb limited ROYG resources that otherwise would go to fight terrorists.

Help Us Help You

¶16. (S) Dailey noted that ROYG cooperation in investigating the September 7 attack on the US Embassy had waned recently. He told his interlocutors that the USG remains ready to help and urged them to treat the USG as a partner. Al-Masri denied any knowledge of a decrease in cooperation saying "no one told me ... if you feel cooperation has declined I wish you had told me before." (Note. LEGATT reports that al-Masri himself is one of the main barriers to cooperation. End Note.) Al-Anisi was even more defensive, complaining "we feel like we are always being tested by the U.S. When will we pass?"

¶17. (C) Dailey also pressed his interlocutors on the importance of creating a ROYG-wide CT strategy that would integrate all ROYG CT elements, and creating a joint CT training center. Al-Anisi disagreed on the need for a formal plan, saying that his organization has "practical and effective" arrangements that allow for the various units to work together. Al-Anisi was equally skeptical about Dailey's suggestions that a working level mechanism was needed to ensure information sharing between the various Yemeni CT players. The NSB director spent a substantial amount of time over lunch asserting the NSB and Supreme Security Committee are sufficient to the task.

Expanding Yemen's CT forces

¶18. (C) Al-Masri broached with Dailey the idea for facilitating response to terrorist activities outside of the capital by creating four new units belonging to the existing Counterterrorism Unit (CTU) located in the following governorates: Hadramout, Abyan, Shebwa and Al-Jawf. Each unit would have 40-50 members. Al-Masri asked if the USG could provide training for 200 soldiers to fill those units. (Note. It is not clear whether these units would be strike units or support units. Embassy will follow up with MOI on this and other questions and provide S/CT with a more detailed proposal for its consideration. End Note.)

Comment

¶18. (C) Ambassador Dailey firmly delivered to his interlocutors the messages that they needed to hear. Al-Alimi's invitation to dine with the Supreme Security Committee certainly seemed intended to convey a message of partnership with the USG on CT issues. While their reactions to his messages were mixed, his intervention moved the ball forward by reinforcing in their minds that concerns the Embassy raises with them on a regular basis about ROYG CT cooperation and capacity are shared at high levels in the USG. End Comment.

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